

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A computer-implemented method of matching an offer for a product with a quote, comprising:

at a first computer:

receiving the offer from a customer;

selecting a preferred provider from a group of preferred providers;

obtaining at least one quote for the product from the selected preferred provider;

evaluating the at least one quote from the selected preferred provider to determine if the at least one quote satisfies the offer;

if the at least one quote from the selected preferred provider does not satisfy the offer, repeatedly:

selecting another preferred provider from the group of preferred providers;

obtaining at least one quote for the product from the selected preferred provider; and

evaluating the at least one quote from the selected preferred provider to determine if the at least one quote satisfies the offer;

until the offer is satisfied or until the group of preferred providers is exhausted;

if the group of preferred providers is exhausted without satisfying the offer, attempting to satisfy the offer from a group of non-preferred providers; [[and]]

if the offer is satisfied from either the group of preferred providers or the group of non-preferred providers, negotiating the purchase of the product from the provider associated with the satisfying quote;

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if the offer is not satisfied from either the group of preferred providers or the group of non-preferred providers, returning an indication that the customer's offer was not accepted.

2. (Original) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein attempting to satisfy the offer from the group of non-preferred providers comprises:

obtaining at least one quote from one or more non-preferred providers in the group of non-preferred providers;

evaluating the at least one quote obtained from each non-preferred provider to determine a most competitive non-preferred quote; and

if the most competitive non-preferred quote can satisfy the offer, selecting the most competitive non-preferred quote as the satisfying quote.

3. (Original) The computer-implemented method of claim 2, wherein the most competitive non-preferred quote includes the lowest quote provided by a non-preferred provider.

4. (Original) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the product is a travel service.

5. (Original) The computer-implemented method of claim 4, wherein the travel service includes airfare.

6. (Previously presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein evaluating the at least one quote from the selected preferred provider comprises evaluating the quotes provided by the selected preferred provider in descending order of value, from the highest quote to the lowest quote, and selecting the highest quote that satisfies the offer.

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7. (Previously presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein negotiating the purchase of the product from the provider associated with the satisfying quote includes making a reservation for a travel service provided by the provider at a value corresponding to the satisfying quote.

8. (Original) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein each quote is obtained from each preferred provider and non-preferred provider indirectly through a global distribution system that stores fare information associated with each preferred provider and non-preferred provider.

9. (Previously presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein each preferred provider includes a respective associated preferred criteria, and wherein evaluating the at least one quote from the selected preferred provider to determine if the at least one quote that satisfies the offer comprises determining if the quote satisfies the preferred criteria associated with the selected preferred provider.

10. (Original) The computer-implemented method of claim 9, wherein attempting to satisfy the offer from the group of non-preferred providers comprises evaluating offers from the preferred providers that do not meet the preferred criteria.

11. (Original) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in Claim 1.

12. (Previously presented) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions which, when executed on a computer, comprise:

receiving from a customer machine an offer representing a value that a customer is willing to exchange for a product;

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ranking each preferred provider in a plurality of preferred providers according to a preferred criteria;

selecting a highest ranked preferred provider from the plurality of preferred providers; and

attempting to match the offer from the customer with the highest ranked preferred provider by determining whether a quote obtained from the highest ranked preferred provider satisfies the preferred criteria associated with the highest ranked preferred provider.

13. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 12, further comprising:

if the attempt to match the offer with the highest ranked preferred provider is successful, negotiating a purchase of the product from the highest ranked preferred provider.

14. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 13, further comprising:

if the attempt to match the offer with the highest ranked preferred provider is unsuccessful, repeatedly attempting to match the offer with other preferred providers until either the offer is matched or until the plurality of preferred providers is exhausted.

15. (Previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 14, wherein attempting to match the offer with other preferred providers is performed in descending order of the ranking associated with each preferred provider.

16. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 14, wherein if repeatedly attempting to match the offer with other preferred providers is unsuccessful, attempting to match the offer with one of a plurality of non-preferred providers, and, if successful, negotiating a purchase of the product from the matching non-preferred provider.

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17. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 16, wherein attempting to match the offer with one of the plurality of non-preferred providers comprises obtaining from one or more non-preferred providers a quote to provide the product, and selecting a lowest quote from the quotes provided that satisfies the offer.

18. (Previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 17 wherein each quote is obtained from each non-preferred provider indirectly through a global distribution system that stores fare information associated with each non-preferred provider.

19. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 12, wherein the product includes a travel service.

20. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 19, wherein the travel service comprises airfare.

21. (Previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 14 wherein each quote is obtained from each preferred provider indirectly through a global distribution system that stores fare information associated with each preferred provider.

22. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 12 wherein the preferred criteria is negotiated with the preferred providers.

23. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 12 wherein the preferred criteria comprises a round robin decision process based upon industry market share of the preferred providers.

24. (Original) A computer system for matching offers with quotes, comprising:  
an online travel service exchanger, including:

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a web server component configured to interface with a customer machine over a network connection and receive from the customer machine an offer for a product, the offer identifying a cost for the product;

a travel server component configured to obtain at least one quote associated with each provider in a plurality of providers to provide the product at a cost, the plurality of providers comprising at least two groups: a preferred providers group and a non-preferred providers group, each preferred provider having a distinct preference ranking; and

the online travel service exchanger being further configured to attempt to match the offer with each preferred provider in the preferred providers group in descending order of preference.

25. (Original) The computer system of claim 24, wherein the online travel service exchanger is further configured to negotiate a purchase of the product from the provider selected as a match for the offer.

26. (Original) The computer system of claim 24, wherein the travel server component obtains the at least one quote associated with each preferred provider from a global distribution system configured to make available fare information associated with each preferred provider.

27. (Original) The computer system of claim 24, wherein the online travel service exchanger is further configured to evaluate quotes provided by each preferred provider in descending order of preference ranking by determining whether the quotes provided satisfy a preferred criteria associated with each preferred provider.

28. (Original) The computer system of claim 24, wherein the online travel service exchanger is further configured to attempt to match the offer with one of the non-preferred

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providers by evaluating quotes supplied by the non-preferred providers to identify a lowest quote and selecting the lowest quote as the matching quote.

29. (Original) The computer system of claim 28, wherein the travel server component obtains the at least one quote associated with each non-preferred provider from a global distribution system configured to make available fare information associated with each non-preferred provider.

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